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12 (37)

MEMORANDUM FOR THE STANDING GROUP

Subject: Cuban Attacks on Reconnaissance Flights--A Contingency Plan

DENY1. The Problem.

To capitalize on an attack on a US aircraft engaged in reconnaissance of Cuba by taking reprisals designed to place pressure on, or to effect the removal of, the Castro regime.

2. Facts Bearing on the Problem.

a. U-2 flights are currently conducted over Cuba at the rate of approximately two sorties per day. These flights have come to be accepted as a US right emanating from Cuban refusal to fulfill the Soviet commitment of October 28, 1962, for on-the-ground safeguards against the presence and reintroduction of offensive weapons.

b. Alternative methods of carrying on surveillance are available, but the quantity of data that could be obtained by these alternative methods is smaller than that obtainable with the U-2 and would not meet the stated requirements. A prolonged hiatus in high altitude surveillance would be intolerable in view of the continuing Soviet option of reintroduction of MRBMs. This need has also become public knowledge as a result of the widespread news coverage and the Secretary of Defense's briefing of the public; hence, there would be substantial political support for the US insistence on maintaining an acknowledged vital right.

GROUP 1

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RELEASE

EXCISE

DENY

DELETE Non-Responsive Info

FOIA Exemptions

PA Exemptions

IS/FPC/CDR

MR Cases Only: EO Citations

TS authority
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Date: 12/18/42

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MR Cases Only: *MR*

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c. Present intelligence resources give a considerable degree of confidence that Washington would have reliable information on the destruction of a U-2 by a SAM shortly after the attack. There is also a probability that correspondingly reliable information would be available with respect to an unsuccessful firing of a SAM on a U-2. A possibility exists that a U-2 could be attacked by MIG aircraft using air-to-air rockets and special attack techniques. In this case also, information would probably be available promptly. However, there remains a possibility that a U-2 could disappear under circumstances in which we had no positive information on the cause of its loss.

d. If the US did institute increasing surveillance by low and medium altitude aircraft, ostensibly and partly in order to acquire more detailed information, the chances of an incident triggered by the firing on a US reconnaissance overflight would be increased.

3. Political Considerations.

a. Balancing Objectives - The fundamental political judgment in this problem involves balancing the opportunity to achieve our long term objective in Cuba, the overthrow of Castro's regime and elimination of Communism from Cuba, with the risks of the US-USSR confrontation and the political acceptability of our means of attaining that objective.

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Since the political and power realities argue against arbitrary and unilateral action without provocation, the exploitation of Cuban provocations is the most feasible means for taking the action necessary.

The political cost of using an incident to press courses of action leading to the achievement of US objectives in Cuba, possibly including the removal of the Castro regime, have been considered. We conclude that such costs will be least, and will be acceptable, if (a) initial Cuban provocation is internationally recognized, and (b) a measured pattern of increasing US military reprisal, in reaction to escalating Cuban actions, is established.

4. Scenario--Phase I.

a. The most appropriate reprisal to destruction of a US reconnaissance aircraft engaged in overflying Cuba would, if the attack were made by a SAM, be either (1) a limited number of SAM sites in the vicinity of the action (depending on the geographical location, three or four nearby sites), or (2) to eliminate all SAMs in the initial attack. In the case of an interceptor attack, either (1) the facilities of the nearest (or, if known, the offending) fighter airfield, or (2) facilities of the few active fighter airfields, should be completely taken out. At the same time, the US would initiate a high volume of harrassing medium and low level reconnaissance overflights, in addition to maintaining the U-2 coverage.

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b. The US would promptly initiate (without publicity) generation of the necessary invasion force, so that it would be ready as soon as possible, in the event Cuban escalation were to lead to a decision to invade.

c. US forces would be placed on appropriate readiness (DEFCON 3 for SAC)

d. The US would inform selected heads of government, NAC, and the OAS governments immediately prior to the reprisal action, of the reprisal and of the UN proposals we planned to make, and would initiate promptly consultations with the NAC and OAS groups on possible future measures which might be required--especially a new quarantine.

e. The US would call for prompt consideration of the crisis in the Security Council, and would vigorously attack Cuba and defend the necessary but limited US reprisal. We would concentrate our charges against Castro's regime, rather than the Soviet Union, and we would take the initiative in hauling him before the UN. We would, in addition to defending the requirement for reconnaissance, offer to end all aerial reconnaissance over Cuba if the Cubans would accept UN (including US) ground inspection adequate to insure against the presence or introduction of offensive weapons or offensive training, and when all Russian military personnel were returned promptly to the USSR.

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a. It is unlikely that the USSR would react to the US Phase I actions by instituting serious counterpressures at Berlin or elsewhere, unless of course they had shot down the first reconnaissance aircraft intending to use our reaction as a pretext to create a crisis in Berlin or elsewhere. If that were the case, we would in any event be faced by a Soviet created crisis. If this were not a deliberate Soviet action to touch off a crisis, the Soviets would probably be cautious at least while assessing our intentions in Cuba. During this period, they would probably give strict orders to Soviet personnel manning the SAMs and in other positions on Cuba to avoid any reprisal or provocative action.

b. The Cubans would almost certainly initially reject the US offer. The Soviets and Cubans would exert maximum political and propaganda pressure on the US in the UN and in general.

c. It is possible that the Cubans might shoot down another US aircraft, either through lack of discipline or miscalculation of the consequences. As a general principle, the most appropriate level of reprisal would seem to be graduated suppression of Cuban air defenses. Thus, if the first plane had been destroyed by a SAM and only a few SAMs had been knocked out in the initial reprisal, and if a second aircraft were attacked by a SAM, all SAMs would be

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destroyed. If the initial attack had been by a fighter, and the second by a fighter or a SAM, any remaining SAMs and fighter airfields would be taken out on the second offense. If the second attack were by AAA, the problem would be complicated but all AAA in the area of the attack could be fully suppressed, as well as any remaining SAMs.

Case III.

a. In the second round of US initiative (Phase III), there are two broad alternative courses of action, depending upon whether the enemy reaction (Phase II) had involved military engagement.

b. Alternative 1. If the Cubans have made a second military attack in Phase II, the US, in addition to the immediate further military reprisal sketched above (in 5.c.), would note that since the Cubans did not accept our offer of an equitable arrangement to dispense with US overflights, and were continuing to interfere with them, a quarantine (on everything but food and medicine) was being established. The US would either seek OAS authorization, for which a majority but not unanimity could probably be gotten, or would undertake it unilaterally on the basis of its earlier consultations with the OAS and NAC, and the OAS resolution of October 1962.

(1) US justification for a quarantine would include stress on the vital Hemispheric need for information on military

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activities in Cuba, the fact that the Cuban action demonstrated a determined effort to overthrow the status quo established in October-November 1962, and the fact that such action further raised suspicions of Cuban military intentions. We were compelled by these facts to interdict all direct and indirect military support to the Island until complete assurance of the security of the Hemisphere could be obtained. We could further note that the US had chosen to exercise a restrained course of action which would involve minimum sacrifice by the innocent Cuban people. We might publicize our earlier offer, and the reasons why the quarantine was necessary, in leaflets to be dropped over Cuba.

(2) Quarantine might be initiated even in the absence of a second Cuban attack, for example if our reconnaissance detected suspicious signs of new threatening military activity, or perhaps if the Cubans or Soviets instituted reprisals elsewhere.

(3) Once the quarantine was established, in due course something would have to give. Assuming the Soviets would comply with the blockade, Castro or some other element of Cuban leaders might decide that there was nothing that the Soviets could or would do to help them, and that agreeing to the removal of Russian military men and inspection, in exchange for withdrawal of the quarantine and harrasing reconnaissance, would be their best deal. The US would, in that case, settle for that agreement.

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(4) The Soviets would, in the case of a quarantine, be under conflicting pressures to do something but not to overcommit themselves. They might risk an incident in challenging the quarantine, which would have to be strictly enforced. If they did undertake counterpressure on access to Berlin, the existing contingency plans would be put into effect as necessary. The US would have to persevere in maintaining the quarantine until Castro cracked or capitulated, or the deterrent effect of our will to stand up to Soviet pressures and counterpressures in other cases would be badly undermined.

(5) It is possible that an effective quarantine would provoke an uprising. In that case, the US would support the uprising by whatever means are necessary, up to and including invasion, to insure its success. (This represents a new situation for which a different scenario applies.)

b-1 [c. Alternative 2. If there is no military counteraction to the harrassing reconnaissance, and no other persuasive trigger for a quarantine, the US could undertake various measures designed to stimulate the Cubans to provoke a new incident.

(1) The US might initially intensify its reconnaissance with night flights, "show-off" low-level flights flaunting our freedom of action, hoping to stir the Cuban military to action.]

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(2) The US might extend its actions to large scale leaflet drops, drops of agents, "CARE"-type packages delivered to known or possible guerrilla areas, and the like. This course might stir the Cubans to military action or induce them to agree to the US terms. It also might start an uprising. In any of these cases the subsequent course of action would be clear, and would be to our advantage either invasion if an uprising occurred or the Cubans undertake military action, or removal of the Russians and grow inspection if the Cubans agreed. If, however, the Cubans did not react, this kind of activity on our part would give them propaganda ammunition. Such measures must therefore be gradual, geared to world political reactions.

(3) Perhaps the US could use some drone aircraft as "bait," flown at low speeds and favorable altitudes for tempting Cuban AAA or aircraft attacks.]

(4) Soviet politico-military counterpressures elsewhere, beyond a vigorous political offensive and propaganda, would not be likely. Soviet commitments to Cuba might rise at whatever time the Soviets decided we did not intend to escalate the crisis--perhaps a few weeks after the invasion force had been readied but not committed. It is possible that the Soviets might approach us privately with an offer of quiet withdrawal of their military men from Cuba in exchange for our dropping the harrasing reconnaissance (by implicitly accepting the U-2's only) and our demand for inspection.

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[d. Thus, depending above all on whether the Cubans were or could be made to be trigger-happy, the development of the initial downing of a reconnaissance plane could lead at best to the elimination of Castro, perhaps to the removal of Soviet troops and installation of ground inspection in Cuba, or at the least to our demonstration of firmness on reconnaissance and, if our initial reprisal had eliminated all the SAMs, we would have greatly increased our future military freedom of action and political options.]

7. Conclusions.

If this course of action were to be pursued,

(1) Medium and low level reconnaissance overflights of Cuba, on a scale paralleling present U-2 high altitude flights and as a supplement to them, should be instituted.

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(2) [Authorization should be given for programs to reduce the present eighteen day period required for the generation of invasion forces, by pre-positioning some equipment, buildup of sealift, etc., so that the US would be able to support more quickly an uprising on the Island, if that were necessary.]

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Addendum

We have considered the question of a fabricated incident and conclude that it would not be feasible or desirable to contrive a mock Cuban attack on a US reconnaissance aircraft. This plan applies to a genuine attack on a US aircraft over or near Cuba.

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